

## General Synod Feb 2020

General Synod met in London from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. This is as usual a brief, factual, but selective, summary of the proceedings at this “group of sessions”. All of the papers, including the summary of the business done, are available on the General Synod pages of the Church of England website.

Dioceses and individual churches will be invited to adopt the ***Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing*** following its proclamation as an Act of Synod, committing all parts of the church to sharing responsibility for the welfare of ministers and their families.

There was a debate on **Deanery Synod Term Limits**. An amendment resolution will be brought to the July Group of Sessions to reverse the default position so that there would be no term limit unless the APCM resolved to impose one.

There were several motions reflecting the church’s social and ethical responsibilities:

- Synod voted to call upon all parts of the church to work to achieve **reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions** and to examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 (the target date was amended from 2045).
- We voted unanimously to endorse the Church’s response to the five recommendations from IICSA and urged its national **safeguarding** steering group to work towards a more fully survivor-centred approach to safeguarding, including arrangements for redress for survivors.
- We voted to apologise for racism experienced by **black and minority ethnic people** in the C of E since the arrival of the Windrush generation.
- Synod supported calls to tackle the issues relating to and, where possible, end ‘**pauper funerals**’
- We requested a study to explore and address why the Church of England is generally less effective in communicating with, and attracting people from, more **disadvantaged communities** despite the gospel being good news for the poor
- We called for preservation of **Legal Aid** as an essential service. Changes to the system have left some of the most vulnerable without access to justice

There was a presentation on the **Living in Love and Faith (LLF) project and the Pastoral Advisory Group (PAG)**. A video on the 5 pastoral principles from the PAG is available on the PAG website. LLF resources will be released in July to “begin a conversation for at least a year”. In my view those conversations will be very challenging. Questions after the presentation included “How do we remain committed to the teaching of Jesus?” and “What happens if we can’t agree?”

An important motion on **Children and Youth Ministry**, recognizing the continuing decline in the number of under 16’s engaging with Church, encourages dioceses to act urgently and support churches with significant numbers of young people, and those with aspirations to increase their numbers. This is an urgent gospel priority, which we must all take seriously.

It is worth noting that there will be **elections for General Synod 2020 – 2025** this summer: all who are Deanery Synod members following this year’s APCMs will form the electorate for General Synod.

Andrew Bell